

I. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES

Safety Outcome 1: Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect

Safety Outcome 1 incorporates two indicators. One pertains to the timeliness of initiating a response to a child maltreatment report (item 1), and the other relates to whether children experience a recurrence of substantiated or indicated maltreatment (item 2).

Missouri did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 78.7 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.
- The State did not meet the national standard for (1) the percentage of children experiencing more than one substantiated or indicated child maltreatment report within a 6-month period or (2) the percentage of children experiencing substantiated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 92 percent of Jasper County cases and 91 percent of St. Louis County cases, compared to 67 percent of Jackson County cases.

A key CFSR finding is that CD is not consistent with regard to initiating investigations of child maltreatment reports or establishing face-to-face contact with the child subject of the report in accordance with the State-established timeframes. In addition, both the State Data Profile and case reviews indicate that CD is not effective in preventing the recurrence of child maltreatment within a 6-month period. Repeat maltreatment within a 6-month period occurred in 8 (53%) of the 15 cases in which there was at least 1 substantiated maltreatment report during the period under review. Six of these cases were in Jackson County.

Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate

Performance on Safety Outcome 2 is assessed through two indicators. One indicator (item 3) addresses the issue of the child welfare agency's efforts to prevent children's removal from their homes by providing services to the families that ensure children's safety while they remain in their homes. The other indicator (item 4) pertains to the child welfare agency's effectiveness in reducing risk of harm to children.

Missouri did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was substantially achieved in 70.0 percent of the applicable cases reviewed, which does not meet the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 71 percent of St. Louis County cases and 54 percent of Jackson County cases.

A key concern identified during the CFSR pertained to a lack of service provision. Case reviews found that although families were being assessed for service needs, in several cases, services were not provided to either the children or the parents, particularly in the in-home services cases. Consequently, risk of harm was not adequately addressed.

Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

There are six indicators incorporated in the assessment of permanency outcome 1, although not all of them are relevant for all children. The indicators pertain to the child welfare agency's effectiveness in preventing foster care re-entry (item 5), ensuring placement stability for children in foster care (item 6), and establishing appropriate permanency goals for children in foster care in a timely manner (item 7). Depending on the child's permanency goal, the remaining indicators focus on the child welfare agency's success in achieving permanency goals (such as reunification, guardianship, adoption, and permanent placement with relatives) in a timely manner (items 8 and 9), or whether children who have "other planned living arrangements" as a case goal are in stable placements and adequately prepared for eventual independent living (item 10).

Missouri did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 34.6 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

- The State Data Profile indicates that for fiscal year (FY) 2002, the State did not meet the national standards for (1) the percentage of children reunified who were reunified within 12 months of the time of entry into foster care; (2) the percentage of children adopted who achieved a finalized adoption within 24 months of entry into foster care, or (3) the percentage of children in foster care for less than 12 months who experienced no more than 2 placements.

The FY 2002 data provided in the State Data Profile indicate that the State meets the national standard for the percentage of children entering foster care who were re-entering within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.

Although performance on this outcome was generally quite low, there was variation across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 58 percent of Jackson County cases, compared to 17 percent of Jasper County cases and 12.5 percent of St. Louis County cases.

A key finding of the CFSR was that CD is effective in preventing re-entry into foster care (item 5). However, all other indicators for this outcome were rated as Areas Needing Improvement. Case reviewers determined that CD was not consistent in its efforts to (1) ensure children's placement stability while in foster care (item 6), (2) establish appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner (item 7), and (3) achieve children's permanency goals in a timely manner (items 8, 9, and 10).

Information from the case reviews and stakeholder interviews suggests that key barriers to attaining permanency in a timely manner are: (1) the fact that some courts in the State do not adhere to the timeframes pertaining to permanency established by the Adoption and Safe Families Act, (2) the insufficient number of State attorneys representing the child welfare agency in all court matters (resulting in continuances and ongoing delays), and (3) the unwillingness of some courts to hear TPR petitions if an adoptive family has not been found for the child.

Permanency Outcome 2. The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Permanency Outcome 2 incorporates six indicators that assess the child welfare agency's performance with regard to (1) placing children in foster care in close proximity to their parents and close relatives (item 11); (2) placing siblings together (item 12); (3) ensuring frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care (item 13); (4) preserving connections of children in foster care with extended family, community, cultural heritage, religion, and schools (item 14); (5) seeking relatives as potential placement resources (item 15); and (6) promoting the relationship between children and their parents while the children are in foster care (item 16).

Missouri did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 61.5 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 83 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 58 percent of Jackson County cases, and 50 percent of St. Louis County cases.

CFSR case review findings indicate that CD makes concerted efforts to place children in close proximity to their families. However, the findings also indicate a lack of consistent effort on the part of CD to (1) place siblings together in foster care; (2) promote frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care, (3) seek and assess relatives as placement resources, (4) preserve children's connections to their families and heritage, and (5) support or promote the parent-child relationship.

Well Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

Well Being Outcome 1 incorporates four indicators. One pertains to the child welfare agency's efforts to ensure that the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents are assessed and that the necessary services are provided to meet identified needs (item 17). A second indicator examines the child welfare agency's effectiveness with regard to actively involving parents and children (when appropriate) in the case planning process (item 18). The two remaining indicators examine the frequency and quality of caseworker's contacts with the children in their caseloads (item 19) and with the children's parents (item 20).

Missouri did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 42.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 83 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 29 percent of Jackson County and St. Louis County cases.

A key CFSR finding is that all indicators for Well-Being Outcome 1 were rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Case reviews found that CD was not consistent in its efforts to assess children and families for services and provide necessary services, involve parents and children in the case planning process, and establish sufficient face-to-face contact between agency children's service workers and the children and parents in their caseloads.

Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.

There is only one indicator for Well-Being Outcome 2. It pertains to the child welfare agency's effectiveness in addressing and meeting the educational needs of children in both foster care and in-home services cases (item 21).

Missouri did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. This determination is based on the finding that the outcome was achieved in 80.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which does not meet the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 100 percent of Jasper County cases and 81 percent of Jackson County cases, compared to 62.5 percent of St. Louis County cases.

A key CFSR finding was that, although the educational outcome was achieved in 80.0 percent of the cases, CD is not consistent in meeting children's educational needs across all of the sites. Findings show that the State did not consistently address truancy and educational neglect for children served in the in-home services cases selected for review.

Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

This outcome incorporates two indicators that assess the child welfare agency's efforts to meet children's physical health (item 22) and mental health (item 23) needs.

Missouri did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 71.4 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 92 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 70 percent of Jackson County cases and 57 percent of St. Louis County cases.

The CFSR case reviews found that CD was not consistently effective in meeting children's physical and mental health needs. A particular concern pertained to the mental health needs of children in the in-home services cases. In many of those cases, reviewers determined that a mental health assessment and/or mental health services were warranted, but the agency did not respond.